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RESTRUCTURING THE ORAL HISTORY
PROGRAM IN ACADEMIC YEAR 1990

BY

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RESTRUCTURING THE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM IN ACADEMIC YEAR 1990

A GROUP STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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The U.S. Army War College Senior Officer Oral History Program and Division and Corps Lessons Learned Programs provide unique insights into all facets of senior leadership in the Army. The value of the programs can be measured in terms of the educational vehicle it provides for leadership development, as well as the unique historical perspectives gained. With the restructuring of the USAWC curriculum beginning in Academic Year 1990, students will spend the first several months of the year in core courses. They will not begin advanced courses, such as Oral History, until after the holiday recess in December. As a result, there will be inadequate time to prepare for and conduct a senior officer oral history without some realignment. This paper seeks to provide background on the evolution of the current program, to emphasize the value of the Oral History program, and to set forth viable options which can be instituted immediately to ensure preservation of this important part of the U.S. Army War College learning experience. (ed.)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACTii
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Historical Objectives	5
Associated Programs	6
Perspective	8
Results	8
II. CURRENT PROGRAM AND GOALS	10
III. SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORY TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	15
IV. IMPACT OF CURRICULUM REALIGNMENT	21
V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM TO THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE	30
VI. RECOMMENDATIONS	41
VII. CONCLUSION	46
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM IN AY 1990

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The vision of the Commandant, U.S. Army War College, for Academic Year 1990 is a realignment of the current curriculum plan to devote the first months of the academic year to core subjects. This "more focused curriculum" directly impacts the current Oral History Program by eliminating the most logical time period for orientation, preparation and in-depth research. Given the critical importance of this phase of the Oral History Program, this paper seeks to examine alternatives and make recommendations for the integration of Oral History into the Academic Year '90 curriculum.

BACKGROUND

The Senior Officer Oral History Program (SOOHP) was established as a joint U.S. Army War College, U.S. Army Military History Institute initiative in October, 1970, at the direction of then Chief of Staff of the Army, General William C. Westmoreland. The original purpose of the

program was to record the management and leadership techniques employed by key retired senior general officers of the U.S. Army. It would also further scholarly research into the military history of the United States. General Westmoreland's original directive was that the Army War College accumulate the recollections of senior officers at the end of their active service careers. The Army War College was expected to then inculcate the information into the program of instruction at the War College.(1)

In April of 1970, a meeting was conducted between the members of the Office of Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel and the Office of the Chief of Military History. The primary purpose of the meeting was to determine the extent of requirements involved in establishment of an oral history program as directed by General Westmoreland. It was agreed that the program should be conducted by the U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, with input from the Office of the Chief of Military History (OCMH). The OCMH representative agreed to establish guidelines for the program that would ensure that tapes and transcriptions resulting from interviews would become official records and that the proprietary rights would rest with the U.S. Army.(2)

The central question involved the nature of the records that were to be created during this debriefing program. The approach taken in the Columbia Oral History Program and

followed by the Marine Corps in its Retired Officer Interview Program was that the proprietary rights rested exclusively with the interviewee and his heirs and assigns, who would dictate the restrictions on access and usage that the custodians would then administer.

In this view documents created would not be official records but private records on deposit in the same category as personal letters. The Senior Officer Oral History Program interviews, however, were to be created on government time and with government facilities and personnel with their primary purpose being official in nature. It was felt, therefore, that they would not fall into the same category as the products of the Columbia Program and other oral history programs conducted by private agencies.

Dr. Forrest Pogue, Research Director of the George C. Marshall Foundation, one of the pioneers in oral history and the then president of the Oral History Association, contended that the interviewer or interviewing agency has as much proprietary right in the interview as does the interviewee. Mr. Cyrus Fraker stated the official The Adjutant General (TAG) view which was that the records produced in the program at Carlisle would be official records and subject to the rules imposed for such documents.(3)

On 12 October 1970, Maj. Gen. Linton S. Boatwright, Director of Individual Training, Office of the Deputy Chief

of Staff for Personnel, signed a letter to the Commandant, U.S. Army War College which implemented the program as follows:

A. Annual participation would involve all generals and selected lieutenant generals due to retire during the year and one or two lesser ranking officers whose unique experience qualified them.

B. It was estimated that the annual program would not exceed eight officers.

C. The Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel would furnish the Commandant, Army War College, the names and expected retirement dates of generals and lieutenant generals as they became available.

D. The Commandant, Army War College, in coordination with the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, would determine those officers of a lesser rank who should be debriefed.

E. The historical material obtained as a result of the debriefing was to be deposited with the U.S. Army Military History Institute (USAMHI), Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. The staffing support for this new project would be provided to the Military History Institute by the Deputy Chief of Staff personnel. The additional personnel were to form a nucleus at USAMHI and be supplemented on a case by case basis by members of the student body and faculty of the Army War College, the Military History

Institute, and the Institute for Advanced Studies whose background and experience would make them knowledgeable on substantive matters to be covered during the debriefings.(4)

OBJECTIVES

While the objectives of the program have changed somewhat over the years, they have been basically, as follows:

- A. To record the management and leadership techniques of selected, retired senior officers and their recollections and opinions on key persons, events, and decisions in the Army's past, particularly their perceptions of the contemporary rationale behind important actions and decisions.
- B. To provide a comprehensive biography of the subject for the historical record, or, in the case of topical projects, to record ideas and events as seen from a variety of viewpoints.
- C. To provide an educational vehicle for the further development of the U.S. Army War College student skills in historical research and analysis.
- D. To provide selected U.S. Army War College students an opportunity to associate at length with a key figure in the Army's past as a means of enhancing their own professional understanding.(5)

ADDITIONAL ASSOCIATED PROGRAMS

Program changes along the way have been evolutionary rather than revolutionary. There have, however, been some significant attempts at expansion. For example, the Command and General Staff College in the mid-70's developed a satellite program in which C&GSC students conducted interviews with general officers and provided copies to the Military History Institute. After several years this program was unable to continue due to a lack of funding for transcribers.(6)

On 2 June 1976 the Oral History Program was expanded to include participation by students in the corresponding studies program for the academic year, 1977.(7) This variation of the Oral History Program involved volunteer students conducting interviews with retired general officers of the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard. This program was successful, while in operation, due primarily to its low cost. Students were asked to submit names of retired general officers who could be interviewed in the same geographical location as the student's home, thereby saving TDY funds. This program was lost when the Department of Corresponding Studies was tasked to replicate the resident course and no longer identify corresponding and resident study in separate categories.

For a short time in 1975 the Oral History Program expanded into videotaping interviews. This program did not continue primarily because it tended to infringe on the candidness of the general officer. He didn't mind discussing certain relationships with an Army War College student, but was somewhat reluctant to be totally candid when an enlisted videotape operator was present.(8)

In annual year 1974 the Senior Officer Oral History Program was expanded to include topical projects in which a number of shorter interviews were conducted focusing on a particular aspect of Army history. Topic examples are the Abrams story, The History of Blacks in the Armed Forces, Mobilization Planning, and, more recently, Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict.

While it was suggested as early as 1976 by Col. James Barron Agnew, then Director of the U.S. Army Military History Institute, it was not until November, 1985 that Gen. Wickham, then Chief of Staff, Army, approved a program to interview outgoing division commanders.(9) The stated purpose of this program was to capture lessons learned from division commanders as they approached the end of their tours.(10) The Division Command Lessons Learned (DCLL) Oral History Program has been an extremely successful and worthwhile program. This concept was expanded to include outgoing corps commanders in FY86.

PERSPECTIVE

The Senior Officer Oral History Program, conducted under the joint auspices of the U.S. Army Military History Institute and the U.S. Army War College, has provided the student participant with the unique opportunity to examine, in depth, the career and leadership techniques of key retired Army senior officers. In its 18 years of operation, the program has proven highly rewarding to the student participants and has produced historical matter significant to researchers.

The Senior Officer Oral History Program is currently managed by the U.S. Army Military History Institute as part of the U.S. Army War College Military Studies Program. Participating students receive credit for the military studies program project while administrative support is provided by USAMHI.

RESULTS

The Oral History Branch of the U.S. Army Military History Institute annually produces a Senior Officer Oral History program project hand list. The latest copy is dated 1 September 1988.

END NOTES

1. DCSPER-SED Memo, dtd 12 Oct 70, Subj: Debriefing of Senior Officers.
2. Draft Memo, dtd 27 Apr 70, Subj: Oral History Program for Retiring Senior Officers.
3. D. A. Military History Memo MH-HS, dtd 1 Mar 71, Subj: Guidelines for Senior Officer Debriefing Program.
4. DCSPER-SED Memo, dtd 12 Oct 70, Subj: Debriefing of Senior Officers.
5. U.S. Army Military History Institute Memo, dtd 12 Apr 83, Subj: USAWC/USAMHI Oral History Program.
6. Transcript of Interview with LTC Andresen, Deputy Director, M.H.I. by LTC Fitzsimmons, dtd 19 Jan 89.
7. Disposition Form (D.F.) issued by U.S. Army Military History Research Center (USAMHRC), dtd 9 Jun 78, Subj: Oral History Program for Students in Corresponding Studies Program.
8. D.F. issued by USAMHRC, dtd 8 May 75, Subj: Memo of Understanding with TRADOC on Video Tape Support.
9. USAMHRC Memo, dtd 23 Jun 76, Subj: Debriefing of Commanders of Major Army Commands.
10. DCSOPS/DAMO-FDQ Memo, dtd 14 Nov 85, Subj: Division Command Lessons Learned Oral History Program--Action Memorandum.

CHAPTER II

OUTLINE OF THE CURRENT PROGRAM AND GOALS

The Oral History option of the Military Studies Program consists primarily of a series of detailed interviews with retired senior officers as part of the Senior Officer Oral History Program, or an interview session with a serving division or corps commander as part of the Division/Corps Command Lessons Learned Program. The end result is a series of tapes and edited transcripts for inclusion in the Military History Institute archives. In addition to the oral history project, all participants must complete a modified individual study, normally not less than 15 pages in length. Although encouraged to undertake the individual study on some aspect of the student's oral history project, topics may be selected based on student interest.(1)

The current aim of the Oral History Program is to gather valuable information on the lives and careers of distinguished retired officers, senior civilian officials of the Army and other selected individuals. The program also includes Division and Corps Command "lessons learned" projects and may include other projects dealing with specific operations or significant issues. The information gleaned is used to supplement official histories, isolate successful command, leadership and managerial techniques and gain important perspectives on defense issues.(2)

Participation in the Oral History Program also affords Army War College students an opportunity to become acquainted with distinguished members of the military profession. Each year as many as 25 students participate in the various Oral History Programs.(3)

To date, typed interviews have been concluded on close to 200 retired general officers and three former Secretaries of the Army. In addition, a number of special topical oral histories, as well as Division and Corps "Lessons Learned," have been prepared.(4)

The autobiographical/senior officer oral history projects have proven to be the most personal. Each project in the program seeks to cover the assigned subject through a review of official documents, personal papers, and other sources, as well as through extensive oral interviews. It provides a record of the senior officer's subjective story. A chronology of the interviewee's life is used to elicit the details of his career, concepts, motivations and observations. Specific events and people important to the interviewee's history are addressed in chronological order and in detail. Several interview sessions are normally required to fulfill this type of project.(5)

The Director, MHI, selects the student participants. Students are generally matched with subjects whose career pattern is similar; however, a wide variety of factors are considered in the selection process. Once selected, all

students who are pursuing the Oral History option participate in workshops which focus on oral history techniques, the use of recording devices, accessibility constraints, research techniques and material available at MHI pertaining to their subject. Additionally, extensive background reading in research methodology, lessons learned, and biographies supplements the actual course meetings.(6)

Meanwhile, selective retired senior officers are invited to participate by the Commandant. Once a positive response has been received, the student begins independent research on the subject, personally contacts the officer and arranges for the initial interview. Subsequent interviews are arranged at the convenience of the interviewee and in alignment with the student's academic schedule.(7)

In 1985 the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans directed the initiation of a project designed to capture lessons learned in Division Command. This has now been extended to Corps Command. Commanders are asked to respond to a set of questions dealing with such issues as readiness, training, doctrine, field operations, organization, ethics, equipment, and leadership. They are asked to give candid assessments of their command experience and their initial perception of issue areas they might have modified.

Finally, participants in the Oral History Program may choose a topical project or group of related themes. For

example, topical projects have been completed on the development of Army aviation; Company Command in Vietnam; the evolution of the role of women in the Armed Forces. The topical project includes some aspects of autobiographical interviewing and requires in-depth research and knowledge on the subject area on the part of the interviewer.(8)

In fulfillment of the objectives of the Military Studies Program, the student participants in the Oral History Program then choose an individual study topic which generally relates to some aspect of their project. All proposed study topics must meet the following criteria:

- It must be a topic of significant importance to the Army, another Service or national security affairs;
- The subject must be capable of being addressed within the limits of the available time, data sources, and student capabilities; and
- The academic challenge of the topic, the planned depth of research, and the study design must be appropriate to the level of the U.S. Army War College curriculum.(9)

Like other MSP papers, the College forwards completed studies directly to decisionmakers who can benefit from the study effort. Student briefings for decisionmakers are also a possibility and are encouraged, if appropriate. Student articles may be published in professional journals reaching

a wide audience and therefore carry an important potential impact to the officer corps. Copies of student papers are forwarded to the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC), which acts as the Department of Defense clearinghouse for technical reports and studies. Student papers are distributed throughout the Department of Defense by means of DTIC access and distribution system.(10)

END NOTES

1. U.S. Army War College (USAWC) Military Studies Program Directive, AY89, p. 4
2. Ibid., p. 19
3. Ibid., p. 19
4. USAWC Senior Officer Oral History Program Interviewer Handbook, dtd 1 Jul 87, p. 1
5. Ibid., p. 1
6. USAWC Military Studies Program Directive, p. 19
7. Ibid., p. 19
8. Interviewer Handbook, p. 2
9. USAWC Military Studies Program Directive, p. 4
10. Ibid, p. 1

CHAPTER III

SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORY PROGRAM TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate how the current program and its goals tie into what the Army prescribes for leader development and the essential role that history plays in it.

Most of what people learn is based upon the experiences of others. The military is no different. General George Patton in a letter to his son, dated 6 June 1944, stated that:

To be a successful soldier you must know history. Read it objectively.... What you must know is how man reacts. Weapons change but man who uses them changes not at all. To win battles you do not beat weapons.... you beat the...man.... You must read biography and especially autobiography. If you do, you will find that war is [better understood]....(1)

The value of studying military history is to prepare one mentally for the violence and intensity of future battles; for, as Clausewitz has stated, "war was...so dangerous that no one who had not taken part in it could conceive what it was like."(2) He further stated that, "one could only learn to conduct war by learning...from what had already been done; by studying war not in the abstract but in the reality."(3)

Reading history develops and disciplines the mind, broadens visions, deals with uncertainties, minimizes

battlefield confusion, accelerates the learning process, and provides insight and knowledge that the leader otherwise would not have. History then becomes a guide for leaders to learn about war from books, and first hand, from its former leaders whenever possible; it eases progress, trains judgment, and helps one avoid pitfalls. However, it will not tell him what to do. Perhaps Ferdinand Foch in 1919 stated it best: "...no study is possible on the battlefield; one does there simply what one can in order to apply what one knows. Therefore, in order to do even a little, one has already to know a great deal and know it well."(4)

A leader who habitually studies history ideally solves problems by searching for broad themes which trace development over time. Additionally, the same leader will try to identify cause and effect relationships, analyze past events and actions in the context of their own times, and consider present circumstances in the light of the past. Such a perspective is important to today's leaders in order that they develop an understanding of the intellectual and functional value of military history.

It is written in FM 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels, that:

Knowing history, therefore, provides senior leaders and commanders with a core of background knowledge. From this can flow certainty of purpose, moral strength, analytical skills, and calmness in the face of uncertainty as they form and refine their vision of what must be done. Weapons and conditions may change, but principles,

relationships, patterns, and mental images remain constant.⁵

The value of history and the lessons learned in the past will be even more crucial in modern war where advancing technology, increasing battlefield lethality and accelerating change have compressed decision cycles and multiplied the complexity of battle.

The Army's operational response to the modern battlefield is AirLand Battle doctrine. As pointed out in the US Army Operational Concept for Leadership, TRADOC Pam 525-28,

The Army faces four basic challenges in implementing AirLand Battle doctrine. The first three are battlefield, readiness, and training. The fourth, which ties it all together, is leadership.⁽⁶⁾

The concept further points out that "...the next battlefield will be less forgiving of mistakes and more demanding of leaders' skills, imagination, and flexibility than any in history."⁽⁷⁾ Recognizing the potential value of leadership in countering the anticipated threat, a sequential and progressive leader development plan was instituted within the Army to include the Army War College in the Spring of 1983. Military history has become a common thread upon which leader development is based. ⁽⁸⁾ Conceptually, leader development is seen as having three pillars. These pillars are formal schooling, operational experience, and self-development. Self-development is primarily individual reading and study and continues

throughout one's career. History is viewed as a force multiplier. The libraries are replete with articles and books on past leaders, their application of warfighting techniques, and their successes and failures on the battlefield. This abundant source of information provides a "living laboratory" per se to systematically prepare and harness the individual intellect in preparation for war. The mental, as well as physical, demands of future battles require each leader to be absolutely ready.

Therefore, leaders are expected to read and learn from history throughout their career. Company grade officers are required to read eight books annually,(9) just as tactical and operational senior leaders are expected to have an extensive reading library for ready reference. Historical readings in military leadership continue to be included in the core curriculum of the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College. Each college has made an asserted effort to integrate the practical application of historical examination into its advanced courses as well. Advanced courses such as leadership assessment, ethics, and oral history provide further insight into the very nature of the profession of arms. The Army War College oral history program in particular offers personal exposure to proven leaders that otherwise would be limited. The same is true of the Corps and Division Commander Lesson Learned Program. The former is tailored to learn from the experience and toil

of former senior leaders. The latter program involves serving general officers who are just completing or have just completed a tour as a division or corps commander. The first hand exposure to these senior leaders in a one-on-one setting is an unusual and intellectual experience. As General Omar Bradley stated, "...observing others is important--trying to determine what makes them stand out. That's why I think we can learn a lot by studying past leaders...."(10) But sitting down with them adds another dimension to the study of former leaders. The Commandants' Guest Lecture program also adds limited exposure to serving and retired general officers or high-ranking civilians.

The merits of this approach have been recognized by the current Chief of Staff, who had directed its use for updating general officers going to joint duty. "Further enhancement to the Army War College calls for ...debriefing Army general officer incumbents of certain critical joint and combined billets and incorporation of the acquired information into the tutorials." All these initiatives will continue to provide some access to the past and present senior leaders of the Army. Each emphasizes the importance of "hearing it first-hand."(11)

END NOTES

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2. Howard, Michael. Clausewitz, Past Masters, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 25.
3. Ibid., p. 30.
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5. United States Department of the Army. FM 22-103, Leadership and Command at Senior Levels. Washington D.C., GPO, 21 Jun 87, p. 11.
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7. Ibid., p. 30.
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9. United States Department of the Army, The Leadership Goal, A progress report of the Army Policy Council, Washington D.C., Local Publications, 11 Jan 1983, p. 14.
10. United States, Department of the Army. Leadership Statements and Quotas. Washington D.C.: GPO, 28 Mar 85, p. 5.
11. Graves, Howard D., "The US Army War College: Gearing Up for the 21st Century," Parameters, Dec 88, p. 8.

CHAPTER IV

IMPACT OF CURRICULUM REALIGNMENT ON CURRENT PROGRAM

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the impact of the Army War College curriculum realignment for Academic Year 1990 on the current Military History Institute's Senior Officer Oral History Program. This chapter will also examine several alternatives to the current Senior Officer Oral History Program to ensure the program remains a viable part of the Army War College curriculum.

The current oral history program has evolved through several iterations since its inception in 1970. The program now consists of three phases: an orientation and preparation phase (1 October - 31 December), an interview phase (1 January - 30 April); and an editing phase (1 February - 30 May).⁽¹⁾ The Senior Officer Oral History Program is a recognized part of the Army War College's Military Studies Program. Students who participate in the oral history program by writing a paper receive credit for the Military Studies Program. In addition, students who take the oral history advanced course receive credit for one of the six elective courses that are required for graduation. The advanced course in oral history is an innovation unique to the Academic Year 1989 curriculum.

The Commandant of the War College has published his general planning guidance for Academic Year 1990 (AY90).

One of the curriculum initiatives for AY90 is a "more focused curriculum"(2) Specifically, the "more focused curriculum" provides for three of the four core curriculum courses to be taught between August and December 1989.(3) To accomplish this goal, the new curriculum is structured to virtually preclude any non-core curricular activities in the first months of the academic year. Thus, a notional model of a core course week reveals only four time blocks not devoted to core subjects. Of these four blocks, one is reserved for the Commandant's lecture series; one is for complementary programs; and the remaining two are reserved for Commandant's time.(4) Specific guidance prohibits the scheduling of other activities during these particular blocks of time.(5)

The published guidance for AY90 does not address the allocation of time during the core curriculum period for "equivalent programs" such as the Current Affairs Panel, the Cooperative Degree Program or the Advance Warfighting Studies Program (AWSP). In the case of the latter program, this is significant because the guidance provides for this program to start in October and run through the Term II Advance Courses.(6) It would appear, therefore, that the AWSP is an exception to the general guidance of limiting curriculum offerings during the core course. It would also appear that no set period of time has been set aside during the core course for this particular equivalent program.

This indicates that the AY90 curriculum is still flexible enough to tolerate an exception and that curriculum time will be allocated to such an exception.

This "more focused curriculum" has a direct impact on the current oral history program. Under the new curriculum guidance, no provision is made for any advanced course offerings during the first portion (October-December) of the academic year. The effect is to eliminate the most logical time period for the critical orientation and preparation phase of the senior officer oral history program.

This is the critical phase of the oral history program for two reasons. First, most students come to the program with little familiarity in the techniques of oral history. This phase of the program familiarizes the student with how to conduct an oral history. Secondly, and more importantly, it is in this phase of the program that the student performs his research and analysis. This is the most academically rigorous portion of the program. It is here that the student does his in-depth research into the subject matter of his oral history project. It is here that the student analyzes his subject, the events in his subject's life and the role these events played in history. The extensive analysis done during this phase of the program leads to a comprehensive interview plan. The more comprehensive the interview plan, the more likely the senior officer oral history will provide the personal senior leader insight and

meaningful lesson-learning that the program was intended to produce when it was first established in 1970.

Given the critical importance of this phase of the oral history program, it seems that this phase can be neither eliminated nor shortened without imperiling the program. This means that if the senior officer oral history program is to remain a viable program within the confines of the War College's ten month academic year then some solution must be sought which preserves this key aspect of the current program while supporting the Army War College's academic initiatives for AY90.

Unfortunately, simple solutions, such as increasing the advanced course credit given for oral history from one to two credits, do not address the real problem in the AY90 curriculum. Although such a solution would, theoretically, give a student more time to perform his critical research and analysis by eliminating one additional advanced course, it would come at the wrong time of the year. As previously stated, advanced courses will not begin in AY90 until after the Christmas break. This is simply too late for a student to start an oral history project. The research and analysis must be done before Christmas, if the project is to be completed by the end of the academic year.

Likewise, it is not feasible to start the oral history program in January with a view to decreasing the time allotted to either the Interview Phase or the Editing Phase

of the program. Such a proposal places the student at a distinct disadvantage since he is literally at the mercy of the senior officer's (interviewee's) schedule. Furthermore, this option underestimates the fact that the editing phase is exceptionally time consuming. The average tape requires three to four hours of editing and typing per one hour of conversation. The average interview consists of eight to ten hours of taped conversation. Sufficient time must be allotted for both the transcribing of numerous hours of taped conversation acquired during the interview and the tremendous editing effort required to produce a usable finished product. Even now with the oral history program covering the entire academic year, the interview and editing phases overlap. Further compression of these two phases is simply not feasible.

Another possible alternative is to expand the existing one year program to a two year program. Under this concept, one student would do the necessary research and analysis on a senior officer during the second half of the academic year. The student would be given advanced course credit for his work. The following year another student would conduct the interview and perform the editing of the transcript.

This proposal has several flaws. First, the student who does the research and analysis is deprived of seeing the fruits of his labor. This student will not learn whether his analysis of the critical elements of the senior

officer's career was correct. Secondly, the student, who actually conducts the interview the following year, merely performs the tasks of an interviewer and editor. He is denied the opportunity to do the critical research and analysis done by the first student. Moreover, he will lack the in-depth knowledge of the first student to be able to follow-up on unanticipated topics which come to light during the interview. The end result could easily be an inferior final product. The students, the interviewee, the Army War College and the Military History Institute will all lose under this proposal.

In a similar fashion, contracting out the interviews to professional interviewers is also not an academically sound proposal. While this proposal would produce an acceptable final product, the cost of such a product would be very high. Students would be deprived of the opportunity to evaluate for themselves the problems of leadership at the highest levels of command. Students would lose the personal insights and reactions of senior leaders in the formulation and execution of key policy decisions. Most importantly, students would miss a very significant mentoring opportunity. Tomorrow's senior leaders would be deprived of a unique chance to learn literally at the feet of yesterday's senior leaders. Gone would be the chance to personally "ride" with the "great captains" of our Army.

The loss of this invaluable learning experience to the future senior leaders of our Army simply cannot be measured.

The solution to the problem of ensuring that the Senior Officer Oral History program remains a viable part of the Army War College curriculum and, more specifically, that sufficient time is allotted to the critical orientation and preparation phase of the course, is two fold. First, there must be increased acceptance and recognition of the role oral history can play in achieving the Commandant's vision of what the Army War College should be. What must be done to accomplish this will be explained in the next chapter. The second part of the solution is a change in the fundamental nature of the relationship of the oral history program to the Army War College's curriculum. The oral history program should not be viewed as an adjunct to the Military Studies Program. The oral history program must be elevated to the status of "equivalent program". In other words, the program should be placed on a par with the Advanced Warfighting Studies Program and the Cooperative Degree Program.

This course of action will permit the oral history program to continue throughout the academic year, just like the other "equivalent programs". This would permit the critical orientation and preparation phase of this program to continue in the first part of an academic year, even in AY90. This can be accomplished by simply permitting oral

history students to participate in the program during the same block of time that other students are participating in the AWSF. The only drawback to this proposal is that students enrolled in AWSF could not take part in the oral history program. Given the numerous other scheduling conflicts that limit the ability of students to participate in all AWC programs, this is a very minor limitation.

An additional benefit of this proposal is that it is equally applicable to the two associated programs of oral history currently in the curriculum. Both the Division Command Lessons Learned (DCLL) and the Corps Command Lessons Learned (CCLL) programs are under time constraints similar to the Senior Officer Oral History program. While these two associated programs do not require the extensive research and analysis of a senior officer oral history, some student preparation is necessary. More importantly, if the goals of these two programs are to be accomplished, then the outgoing division and corps commanders must be interviewed before they leave their command. This is critical if the lessons learned are to be shared with the incoming commander in a timely fashion. Thus, given the nature of the summer rotation cycle, the interviews with these out-going commanders must be done during November or December. Likewise, the transcribing and editing must be done between January and February. By adhering to this time sequence not only will the finished product be done in a timely fashion,

but the students in these programs will still have sufficient time remaining in the academic year to complete the MSF writing requirement currently associated with these two programs.

Thus by elevating the current Senior Officer Oral History Program to a more significant category of curriculum programs, the most critical phase of this particular program is allowed to continue, even under the AY90 curriculum guidance. Likewise, two associated oral history programs remain viable parts of the AWC experience. This will ensure the continued success of several very important programs for the students, the Army War College and the Military History Institute. What must be demonstrated next is why these are such important programs to AWC.

END NOTES

1. USAWC Senior Officer Oral History Program Interviewer Handbook, dtd 1 Jul 87, p. 2.
2. USAWC Memo dtd 21 Nov 88, Subj: Academic Year 1990 Curriculum Guidance, p. 1.
3. Ibid., Encl 1.
4. Ibid., Encl 5.
5. Ibid., Page 6.
6. Ibid., Page 5.

CHAPTER V

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM TO THE ARMY WAR COLLEGE

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate why the oral history program is of such importance to the Army War College that it warrants not only retention, but elevated status in the curriculum. This chapter will also identify several reasons why the importance of this program was not recognized by either the Military History Institute or the Army War College, when the curriculum was restructured for Academic Year 1990.

The oral history program is important to the Army War College for several reasons. First, this program supports several approved academic initiatives that have been adopted for AY90. The oral history program, for example, clearly supports the academic initiative calling for a more focused curriculum.(1) As the Curriculum Committee observed when attempting to clarify the focus of the Army War College's curriculum "...leader development in the Army is based on three pillars - formal schooling, operational experience, and self-development."(2) What better way to focus on operational experience than to study history? What better way to study history than to talk with those that lived the operational experience? The oral history program, by its

very nature, provides a uniquely focused opportunity to learn how our senior leaders handled the strategic issues of their day. As the Commandant has written, "...the curriculum should be designed to provide the student a strategic perspective...."(3) This program clearly meets that goal by giving the student the historical perspective for today's strategy.

The second academic initiative that the oral history program supports is the one calling for increased emphasis on critical analysis and creative thinking.(4) As discussed earlier, in Chapter IV, the critical orientation and preparation phase of the Senior Officer Oral History Program is specifically designed to provide in-depth research and analysis on a particular senior officer's career. The creative thinking in this phase is found in the student's interview plan. It is the interview plan which reflects how the student has thought through the interview. It shows how well the student has identified the senior officer's role in history, his contributions to strategic issues of the day and even, perhaps, his involvement in controversial decisions. The more analysis and creativity that go into the interview plan, the greater the chance that significant personal insight and meaningful lesson-learning will be produced from the interview.

The third academic initiative which is reflected in the oral history program is the one calling for more rigor in

the academic programs with a corresponding reduction in structure.(5) With the exception of the time sensitive phases of the program, the oral history program requires minimal structure. How the interview is conducted, the subjects covered, and the length of the interview are all left to the student. The success or failure of the interview rests solely with the student. Given the caliber of the students at the War College, the academic rigor of the course will come from the best possible source - the student himself. It will be the student knowing that he will be meeting, talking with, and probing the mind of a very senior officer that will drive the academic rigor of this program.

In addition to satisfying the academic initiatives described above, the oral history program is important to the Army War College curriculum because it helps to achieve one of the basic themes of the War College. It is a fundamental theme of the War College to provide senior leaders to our nation who "understand the role of the Army officer in a democratic society."(6) Again, the question must be asked, how better to achieve an understanding of our role in a democracy than to study the lives of those who helped to formulate, and where appropriate, implement national policy? What better role models are there to study than the most successful senior leaders of our profession? The oral history program is designed to

accomplish this very fundamental objective of the War College. The student of oral history meets, talks and learns from the very best examples of an Army officer's role in our democratic society.

It should also be noted that the oral history program is directly related to the following general subject areas of the War College: senior leadership and ethics; war, national policy and strategy; and implementation of national military strategy.(7) In a similar fashion, the oral history program supports the War College curriculum by focusing on the following four subject areas which have been designated to receive special emphasis in AY90. They are: the ethics of the military profession; the role of landpower in military strategy; joint and combined operations; and oral and written communications.(8)

Since the stated purpose of the oral history program is "to evaluate the problems of leadership at the senior officer level, to reflect on the conduct of senior officers and their action," the subjects of senior leadership and ethics are given exceptionally close scrutiny in this program.(9) Likewise, the subjects of national policy and strategy, as well as implementation of national military strategy, are addressed in the oral history program because the program is designed to cause the student "...to reflect on the...formulation and execution of the defense policies of the United States..." (10) The oral history program also

provides the opportunity to examine joint and combined operations because of the key positions held in joint assignments by many of the senior leaders who are the subjects of interviews. Lastly, it should be obvious that good oral and written communication skills are the keystones of this particular program.

The final reason the oral history program is important to the Army War College is its popularity. This program is successful because it is popular with the students. Students who participate in the program feel they are accomplishing something worthwhile. They feel as if they are helping to preserve part of our Nation's, and more importantly, part of our Army's heritage. So popular is the program that students often call the Military History Institute upon notification that they will be attending the Army War College in an attempt to secure a place in the program. A second reason the program is popular is because of the products that the program produces. The Senior Officer Oral Histories are a valuable research tool for the War College faculty and student body. These histories are often used to support research projects for classes in the War College, as well as MSP projects. Professional military historians also rely on these documents when doing research. The DCLL and CCLL programs provide immediately useful products for incoming division and corps commanders. The topical projects have provided significant insight into

specific subject areas that otherwise might not be addressed. All of these products are used throughout the Army. Many of these products have received very positive feedback from users at the highest level within the Department of the Army. Lastly, this program is popular with the senior officers who are the subjects of the oral histories. Frequently, they inform the presiding Commandant of the War College that they were very pleased with the final product produced by the student. Some of these senior officers have even taken the student historian under their wing in an attempt to continue the mentoring process that began during the interview.(11)

Given the importance of this program to the Army War College curriculum and given the popularity of this program, the next issue to be addressed is why the importance of this program was not recognized when restructuring the curriculum for AY90.

The answer to this question lies both with the Military History Institute and the Army War College. On the part of MHI, the failure to ensure that the needs of the current oral history program were identified in the curriculum for AY90 is twofold. The first reason is that, of late, greater emphasis has been placed on the DCLL and CCLL programs to the detriment of the Senior Officer Oral History Program. There are several factors involved in this shift of priorities. One factor is that the DCLL and CCLL programs

are more visible to both the War College and outside organizations. Both programs involve officers on active duty who are currently in key billets. These officers more often than not move on to even greater positions of responsibility and influence. By way of contrast the Senior Officer Oral History Program involves only retired officers. Another factor is that the DCLL and CCLL programs are intended to produce a final product for incoming commanders. Thus, the results of the interviews are often available within 90 days of the interviews being completed. Again by way of contrast, the Senior Officer Oral History Program is much more time consuming because the interviews are far more extensive. The end result is that the DCLL and CCLL programs have much more visibility than the Senior Officer Oral History Program. Moreover, the success of the lessons learned program has caused the War College to copy it. The War College now debriefs Army general officers who occupy critical joint and combined billets. The results of these interviews are used to brief general officers designated for joint and combined assignments.(12) Given the timeliness and visibility of the DCLL and CCLL programs, it is easy to see why the Senior Officer Oral History Program was lost in the curriculum realignment.

The second reason MHI did not ensure sufficient allocation of time in the new curriculum for Senior Officer Oral History Program is that the institute has not sold the

value of this particular program to the academic department heads in the War College. While the Commandant and the Director of Academic Affairs might understand the significance of the program, it is the heads of the academic departments that vie for the time in a curriculum. Unless the department heads can be persuaded that oral history programs can support, supplement and facilitate the development of their department's particular subject matter, the oral history programs will be shunted to the side when it is time to develop the curriculum. This is not to imply any ill will on anyone's part. It is simply a matter of a limited resource, i.e. curriculum time, and a lack of awareness that a particular product, i.e. oral history, can play in supporting the goals of the War College curriculum.

Turning to the Army War College, there are several factors which have contributed to its failure to recognize the importance of the oral history program. One has already been inferred. That is, a lack of knowledge among the faculty of what resources are available at MHI to assist them in achieving their course objectives. The faculty must become more aware of how history can help to achieve the goals of the Army War College. This was recognized by the Curriculum Committee when it was assessing the current War College curriculum. This committee "...identified a need to improve the integration of military history...into all courses...." (13)

Another factor is that the War College, in devising the AY90 curriculum, has chosen to focus on short-term fixes to the current curriculum, rather than focusing on the long-term contributions of particular programs to the Army. Stated another way, the curriculum changes tend to be myopic. The changes only modify what already exists at the War College. The changes do not look to see what the War College can do for the entire Army. This is demonstrated by the increased attention given to the DCLL and CCLL programs, as well as the War College's new debriefing program for general officers in joint billets. Both programs are designed to produce an immediate product for immediate use. Neither of these programs focus on really long-term senior leadership development efforts, nor do they focus on long-term strategic issues. One cannot achieve such results by short interviews of senior officers covering one tour of duty. This focus can only be achieved by looking at the long-term development of senior officers, preferably, those with several key assignments dealing with strategic issues. In short, the Senior Officer Oral History Program is where the focus should be to capture the critical insight into strategic issues and senior officer development.

The last factor impacting on this issue is the lack of a conscious effort by the War College to bring the MHI into the AWC fold on the institutional level. While there are some faculty members who utilize the resources of the MHI

and while the MHI is actively involved in supporting some of the AWC's academic programs, there is no unity of effort demonstrated by the organizations. Policy decisions are made that either conflict with or hinder the goals of one institution or another. This situation exists even though the Commandant is responsible for both institutions. It would appear that greater effort must be made to bring both organizations to the realization that they have mutual interests and goals. Both institutions must realize that, by assisting each other, they can achieve their individual goals while, at the same time, they enhance the stature of both organizations. The War College, as the dominant institution, must take the lead in this refocusing of effort.

This chapter has attempted to explain the importance of the oral history program to the War College. It has also attempted to explain why the importance of the oral history program has not been fully appreciated. The next chapter will examine how to resolve these difficulties by proposing several recommendations.

END NOTES

1. USAWC Memo dtd 21 Nov 88, Subj: Academic Year 1990 Curriculum Guidance, p. 1.
2. Graves, Howard D., "The U.S. Army War College: Gearing Up for the 21st Century," Parameters, Dec 88, p. 4.
3. Ibid., p. 5.
4. Curriculum Guidance, p.2.
5. Ibid., p.2.
6. Ibid., p. 2.
7. Ibid., p. 2.
8. Ibid., p. 3.
9. USAWC Senior Officer Oral History Program, Interviewer Handbook, dtd 1 Jul 87, p. 3.
10. Ibid., p. 3.
11. This statement is based on an interview with a senior member of the MHI staff.
12. Graves, p. 8.
13. Ibid., p. 5.

CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations represent the considered opinion of the authors. Action on these recommendations should be taken prior to publishing AY90 curriculum guidance. We are confident that the Oral History Program restructuring recommended in this chapter will benefit the overall AWC curriculum. We recommend:

1. That the Oral History Program be elevated to an "equivalent program" status in AY90 curriculum . This will allow it to be scheduled over the entire AY.

Scheduling of the time allotted to learn the interview techniques of oral history, and to conduct research and analysis is critical. These are the most academically rigorous portions of the program. Given their importance, shifting the program into the last half of the academic year would not allow a student to complete the required pre-work and still complete the interview and edit phases. Additionally, a strong case can be made for eliminating the MSP paper required for those students who are selected to conduct a Senior Officer Oral History (SOOH) interview. SOOH interviews require extended preparation and detailed research and analysis. As stated earlier, the effort required to edit and prepare the interview transcript alone

is quite heavy. The process requires solid written communication skills and mastery of English grammar. It also calls for active listening skills to ensure that the interviewee's interest is properly represented.

2. That academic department heads be made aware of the value and contributions oral history can make to current curricula. This would require an annual update by MHI.

Additionally, the transcripts themselves can be used to support or supplement senior leadership papers and/or case study development. The lessons-learned can be incorporated into tutorials. They also might be worthy of inclusion into one's own professional library. Preparation for and conduct of an interview requires many of the attributes of a professional such as creativity, initiative, determination, foresight and thoroughness. Information gained from these interviews would contribute to case studies briefed in the Advanced Warfighting course and the Ethics Advanced Course.

3. That the Commandant, USAWC, fully integrate interview efforts of the AWC and MHI to ensure mutual interests and goals are realized. The Military History Institute be tasked to take the lead on debriefing of general officers serving in joint billets.

AWC recently established an adjunct to the General Officer Update Program which calls for selected G.O.'s

serving in joint billets to be interviewed as they rotate out. MHI currently runs similar efforts, such as the Division and Corps Commander Lesson-Learned Programs with AWC students. AWC students could also be used as interviewers for the G.O. Program. An experienced transcriber support staff is already assembled at MHI and could be augmented if required to take on G.O. update interviews.

4. That the Military History Institute tie the Senior Officer Oral History and Division/Corps Commander Lessons Learned to the Commandant's guest lecture program.

When a speaker has been interviewed as a part of the Oral History Program extracts of his transcript could support his existing biography. This would increase the potential for a more in-depth question and answer period.

5. That the Military History Institute more aggressively advertise the products available from the Oral History Programs. Copies of the Oral History Hand List should be distributed to students and faculty.

Presently, the final products are not widely distributed. They are not an item actively sought for study and research. Their value to the operational and strategic perspective of war and preparedness has not been maximized.

6. That access to the Military History Institute library be provided to students at night.

This would provide additional resource alternatives to students during the evening. The hours should parallel the War College Library.

7. That the AWC/MHI identify a list of contemporary issues common to each senior leader interviewed.

This initiative provides for independent study and research in contemporary topical issues. It would provide first hand experience in applying lessons learned to current Army strategic, operational, budgetary, and force structure issues. It certainly has the potential to assist the student in his/her transition to the strategic level of thinking. It should also generate further interest in military history and certainly enhance the 'word-of-mouth' interest in MHI as a supportive and viable historical resource center. AWC students could be assigned this project as an MSP topic.

8. That copies of transcripts which are releasable under agreement with the interviewees be routinely signed out of the MHI archives for use by students and faculty.

Transcripts may only be used within the archives,
during operating hours, at present. This makes their use
more difficult than it should be.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The recommendations outlined in Chapter VI reinforce the Commandant's belief "that expertness can come only from an ardent study of tactics and strategy both historical and current."(1) This focus on history will result in more insight into the nature of men, produce techniques for unified action, and, last but not least, provide an opportunity for continuous study of both the successes and failures of our military in battle. This focus also attempts to integrate the lessons of the great captains into the curriculum of this capstone senior-level course.

This focus also builds upon time tested leadership principles. It provides an opportunity to know more about oneself and to strengthen personal attributes. The leader also can become more technically and tactically proficient in the application of the strategic and operational art of war through his study of history. Honing creative and analytical skills will enhance decision-making timeliness and soundness. The linkage of history throughout the curriculum will further illuminate the critical need for the leader to set the example.

The study of history also offers collateral benefits. Routine reading increases research and communication skills.

A better understanding of the Army's history can contribute to a sense of corporateness, esprit, and continuity. This focus will encourage further leader self-development, essential "to raise, provision, deploy, fight, maintain, sustain and educate the Army in the complex tactics and strategies required to deter wars, to fight wars, and to win wars." (2) A "soldier must be rooted in the past to understand the present so that he may project himself into the future." (3)

END NOTES

1. United States Department of the Army FM 100-1, The Army, Washington D.C., GPO, 14 Aug 81, p. 1.
2. Unknown. "The Philosophy of the Army Officer Corps," Army Times, 8 Oct 84.
3. United States Department of the Army. Leadership Statements and Quotes. Washington D.C., GPO, 28 Mar 85.

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